The
Niagara Advance

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Thursday, December 24, 2015

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konzelmann estate winery

Writer of Santa letter found after 22 years 2

Annual levee at Fort George welcomes new year 6

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Don Pozojevic of York Road does an outstanding job of decorating his home for Christmas every year, drawing admirers from across the region.
Janice Haines/Special to the Advance

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Mystery of letter to Santa solved – 22 years later

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

A Niagara-on-the-Lake man has solved a Christmas mystery that has haunted him for 22 years.

Tom Hurst was a letter carrier in Halifax, NS for about 15 years, and volunteered at Christmas to answer letters to Santa. He's a bit of a character with a sense of humour, and he says he had a lot of fun giving a personalized touch to his responses, answering hundreds every year.

Most of them were requests for the most popular toys of the day, but 22 years ago, he came across one that was very different - a young girl asked Santa if he could send her dad to see her.

"Well anyway there are a few things I hope you can grant," she said in her letter to Santa.

"They are to see if you can send me my dad or if you can't do that then I would like a grape escape game or some thing like that or Dreem phone or you can just bring a card or some thing like that," the letter said.

She also asked Santa to "make my family stop fighting."

The letter was signed Candy W., with no last name, post mark or return address. Canada Post did everything possible to try to track down where the letter had come from, but was unsuccessful, Hurst said.

If they had found Candy, they had a psychologist on staff to deal with letters such as hers, he said - they weren't that rare. But when they couldn't find her, he asked for the letter to keep, and he's never forgotten it. It broke his heart, he said, that she ended her letter saying "Santa, I believe in you." He knew he was going to let her down by not responding.

"Here was a little girl who was reaching out for help, who really needed a reply, and I couldn't give it to her," he said.

He's kept the letter tucked away in his bible ever since, and every Christmas, he brings it out to read it.

Hurst, 58, left Nova Scotia in 1995, and travelled around for five years "chasing my dream of acting," before settling in NOTL 15 years ago. He works backstage at the Shaw Festival Theatre, and with a home in town, feels he's finally put down roots.

When he's had a good year, he says, reading Candy's letter reminds him there are people much less fortunate who could use a helping hand, and when his year has been not so great, maybe feeling a little sorry for himself, it's a "reality check" to remind him there are people with far more serious problems than his.

This year, with all that's going on around the world, he said, he decided to post the letter on Facebook as a reminder there are children in need everywhere. He also hoped that he might finally locate the little girl who never heard back from Santa, and find out what became of her.

Last week, when CBC picked up the story in Nova Scotia, he got his answer.

Candy, who is now 30, messaged him, and asked him to give her a call, which he did.

Her mother had seen a photo of the letter and recognized it - she had helped her daughter, then eight, address the envelope, although she didn't know what the letter said.

"She told me a little bit about why she wrote it - her parents were going through a divorce, and she thought Santa should know about it," he said.

See Page 3

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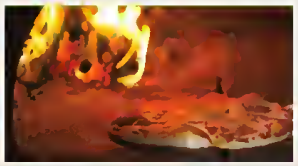

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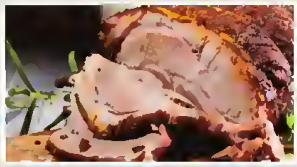

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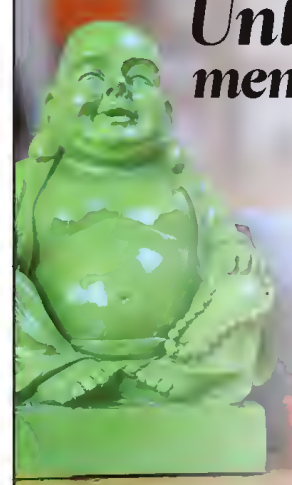

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Tom Hurst has found the writer of a letter to Santa he has kept for 22 years, wondering what had happened to the young girl who wrote it.

'Other kids going through tough time'

From Page 2

"We've talked and texted a couple of times, and now I feel like her big brother. It's my instinct to look after her."

She's doing well, working as a reporter for a local radio station, and asked him to stop in to see her on his next trip to Nova Scotia. He is determined to make that happen, he said.

He says the letter will continue to stay with him, and he will bring it out to read every Christmas, "only now I have my answer. It's the end of something, but also the beginning of something new. Reading it will make me smile to think of her, but I'll always remember there are other kids out there still going through a tough time."

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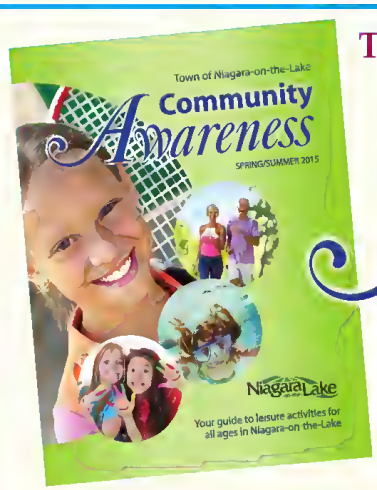

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Look for your copy of the Spring/Summer Community Awareness 2016 in the Niagara Advance February 25, 2016

Regional tax shift a no–go, Burroughs assures council

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

A proposal by Niagara Region to shift more of the tax burden to residential properties from industrial and commercial properties has been dropped, said Regional Councillor Gary Burroughs in an update to town council last week.

He had been asked to come to the council meeting to address concerns about the proposed change in regional tax policy.

The Region was considering a change to the tax ratio that would lower commercial and industrial taxes, in an effort to attract more businesses to the region, said Burroughs.

But that would have had a significant impact on residential taxes, especially for the smaller municipalities that don't have a large commercial base, he said.

Of the eight municipalities that had responded to the proposal, all opposed it, he said.

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, it would have meant a 12 percent increase to residential property taxes, he said.

"It affects us as much as anybody."

Despite a zero percent increase to the billion-dollar regional budget in 2016, NOTL will still see an increase in its share, due to increased assessment, he said.

"The challenge we have is everyone wants to live in NOTL. Our growth is substantially more than the other 11 municipalities. We share a bigger percentage of the budget every year."

He said it's looking to go up again this year to 8.52 percent of the $1-billion regional budget, when it used to be around six percent, he said.

"Every dollar we spend at the region is distributed across the municipalities by assessment. The more we increase our assessment, the bigger our share is of the regional budget."

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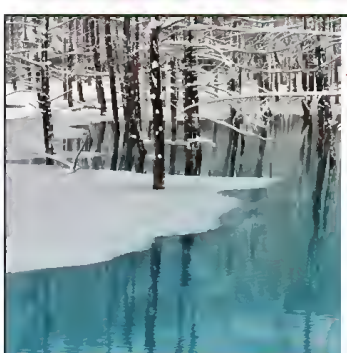
It is hard to believe that we have celebrated 134 holiday seasons in Niagara!
Thank you for another great year. We are grateful and honoured to serve our clients these many years.
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Traffic–calming measures in St. Davids will go

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

The 'bump-outs' on Four Mile Creek Road approaching St. Davids were meant to be a calming device, but they aren't safe, says Regional Coun. Gary Burroughs.

He has asked the region to remove them, and has received a positive response. He was hoping to see some action taken before the cold weather, but the work has yet to be done, he said.

Burroughs was asked by Coun. Jim Collard at last week's council meeting, when he appeared to provide a regional update, when the bump-outs would be removed.

Burroughs says the raised curbs that protrude from the side of the road towards the centre were intended to slow down traffic as it moves around the bump-outs. But he's afraid cars will hit them, and the danger becomes more of an issue when the curbs are snow-covered, he said.

The cost of removing them has been estimated at $110,000, and he expected it would have been done by now, but assured Collard he would check with the region to see if the work has been scheduled.

Kenn Moody, president of the St. Davids Ratepayers Association, says his group did not ask for the removal of the bump-outs, but supports having them gone, due to the same safety concern.

"We were told about four or five months ago that they were going to come out, and although we didn't make the request, we want them gone. They aren't well-marked and we think they might be a safety issue."

Although he's seen no report that indicates the effectiveness of the bump-outs as traffic-calming measures, Moody says he's seen nothing that makes him think they work.

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Comment

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The Niagara Advance

Peter Conradi Regional Editor
Penny Coles Editor

Point of View

Wishing peace to all

We're counting down to the holidays, and it's hard not to feel the excitement in the air.

Hopefully, the hustle and bustle, and rushing around is behind us, the holiday meal is in the oven and we're settling down to enjoy the festivities.

Whatever our religion or philosophical beliefs, now is the time, as we head into a new year, to take a deep breath, relax and reflect on the past year and all of the blessings that have been given to each one of us. In the crazy rush to prepare for the holidays, it's easy to forget what the spirit of Christmas is all about, including taking time for enjoying the company of family members and the people who feel like family to us.

We deserve the break from the mundane tasks in daily life that can sometimes overwhelm, and instead can focus on what really matters: family, friends and good health.

And remember that peace and good will toward mankind, which are the sentiments that are often sung about in Christmas carols? But are often forgotten? This is the time to show our compassion for those who live in countries where those are elusive, and to feel grateful to live in a country others come to as their safe haven.

There are many, many wonderful people in our community who are shining examples of what it means to be kind, compassionate and generous, and who exemplify all of these meaningful qualities not just at Christmas time, but all year round. We just have to stop and take a moment to notice that goodness is all around us.

From all of us at the Niagara Advance, we would like to wish you all a safe and happy holiday.

Luca Fierro, 7, won the Niagara Advance Christmas colouring contest for kids aged six to 10 and collected his gift basket from Ben McLean at Maple Leaf Fudge.

Comment

NOTL Hydro challenges Minister of Energy to debate

The Board of Niagara-on-the-Lake Hydro would like to invite and challenge the Minister of Energy to a public debate on the historical, present and future plans on how to get the cost of electricity down and more manageable for the average consumer. Discussions and input from all interested parties are welcome.

The recently released Report of the Ontario Auditor General (AG report) has highlighted significant mismanagement of the electricity industry in Ontario that has substantially increased the cost of electricity to our customers. To reduce the current and future cost of electricity, it is clear that immediate and drastic actions are required.

As a local electricity distribution company, NOTL Hydro deals directly with the electricity consumer and sees the challenges the high prices are causing. NOTL Hydro therefore recommends the following immediate actions to assist our customers.

1. Immediately cancel the FIT and MicroFIT programs and immediately cease signing any new contracts. We cannot afford any more above market costs to be built into future pricing.

2. Calculate and transfer the present value of the excess pricing in the existing FIT and MicroFIT contracts to the Ontario Electricity Financial Corporation (OEFC) in a manner similar to that done with Ontario Hydro and the Non-Utility Generation contracts at the time of the market opening. This would remove these costs from the current pricing.

3. Re-instate the Debt Retirement Charge for residential customers. It was never right just to eliminate this for residential and not business customers. This charge will be needed to pay down the above excess pricing cost (Recommendation #2) for years and decades to come. Annual transparent reporting from the OEFC will be required to show how this new debt is being paid down.

4. Stop all provincial Conservation and Demand Management (CDM) programs. This will save $300 million per year per the AG report. CDM Is not needed in a surplus environment and consumers will undertake their own CDM activities based on market prices.

5. Review the pricing of exports. While we have no experience in this area other experts have suggested that better prices could be obtained on the excess generation we are forced to export through more proactive management of this activity.

6. Eliminate the Meter Data Management and Repository (MDM/R). This is a redundant service whose cost is part of the Wholesale Market Service Rate on the customer bill. Local distribution companies get the needed information elsewhere.

7. Eliminate the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP). This is a tax designed to fund a social program; support to low income customers. Providing refundable income tax credits would be more progressive and more efficient.

8. Separate the transmission and distribution businesses of Hydro One as proposed in the initial report by Ed Clark. The transmission business would remain publicly traded with private investors and the Government of Ontario could sell additional ownership for infrastructure funding.

9. Break-up the Hydro One distribution business into multiple smaller local distribution companies with local governance. Parts of this business could also be sold to local distribution companies. It is clear from the AG report that management of the Hydro One distribution business needs to be brought closer to its customers. We believe significant cost savings and improved customer service can be achieved by this action.

10. Tender the sale of Hydro One Brampton. We have no objection to the proposed LDC merger but as a taxpayer we wonder if the Government of Ontario is getting the best price for this asset.

11. Restore OEB oversight over all aspects of the electricity industry. A truly independent regulator is needed to protect Ontario electricity consumers. Bill 135 should be amended to provide this.

The cost of electricity for the Ontario consumer has risen by around 50 per cent over the last ten years. Electricity costs are largely made up of generation, transmission and distribution costs (for most distribution companies though Hydro One is a notable exception) have largely gone up at around the rate of inflation which has been around 18 per cent (over 10 years). The cost of generation has risen by over 110 per cent during this time.

More details as to why the generation costs have risen so high can be found in the Auditor General's report.

Tim Curtis
president
NOTL Hydro

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OUR LETTERS POLICY

To be considered for publication, all letters must include the writer's full name, address and telephone number for verification purposes.
Only your name and the city/town where you live will be published.
Please keep your comments to a maximum of 500 words.
Submit your letters via e-mail to: penny.coles@sunmedia.ca

Opinion

Council accomplishments show success in 2015

Pat Darte
Lord Mayor's update

The holiday season is such a special time of the year as we gather with family and friends, take part in our annual traditions, and celebrate all that the holidays mean to us.

Hopefully we can also take some time out of our busy schedules and the rush of the season to enjoy some rest and relaxation and truly appreciate all we have.

Now that we've held our final town council meeting for the year, we can look hack on a numher of accomplishments and activities that have made this year a success.

As most of you will know, the Town purchased the former Niagara District Secondary School property earlier this year and issued a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) to seek responses from those interested in developing the site. We are continuing to move forward in the RFEI process, and town council is looking forward to seeing the property heing used again.

We also decided to keep the former lawn howling cluh property at 244 Regent Street and are currently reviewing ideas and comments from residents to identify a vision and possihle uses for the site.

The Town also had the thrill of qualifying for the national Communities in Bloom competition in 2016 after receiving a five-bloom rating, and the Landscape of Nations puhlic artwork at the Queenston Heights Park is underway, with an unveiling celebration planned for this summer.

Other achievements this year include the live broadcast of our committee and council meetings; moving to LED streetlights for improved energy efficiency and cost savings; and unveiling the first puhlic electric vehicle charging station in town.

In addition, town council estahlished a new hudget review process this year, and for the 2016 taxation year, ratepayers can now request to receive their property tax hills and notices from the Town via e-mail.

Bringing the GO Train service to Niagara has heen another hot topic, and we hope to hear an announcement from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation in early 2016.

Niagara-on-the-Lake continues to be recognized for the exceptional value we offer to over two million visitors each year, and has recently been named by travel search site Trivago as one of Canada's Top 10 Best Value Cities for 2016.

Far beyond that, however, is our sense of community pride and partnership.

This can he seen in the significant growth of local festivals, including the ice wine festival for the full month of January, and the expansion of Bravo Niagara!, Music Niagara, and the Niagara Jazz Festival.

On behalf of town council, I wish you and your family the very hest this holiday season and in the coming year.

I look forward to what this next year will hring.

Miller Davis won this year's Niagara Advance Christmas colouring contest in the four and under category, and was rewarded for his efforts with a beautiful gift basket from Maple Leaf Fudge on Queen Street in NOTL.

letters to the editor

Councillor brunt of bullying

So here we go. Another week where Councillor Martin Mazza is denied. This time on a 'technicality.'

To some, it may seem as if he is the prohlem.

But consider that for his first term on council he was regularly one of three or four memhers at the tahle who were of like mind – and that group was routinely the hrunt of hullying hy other council members.

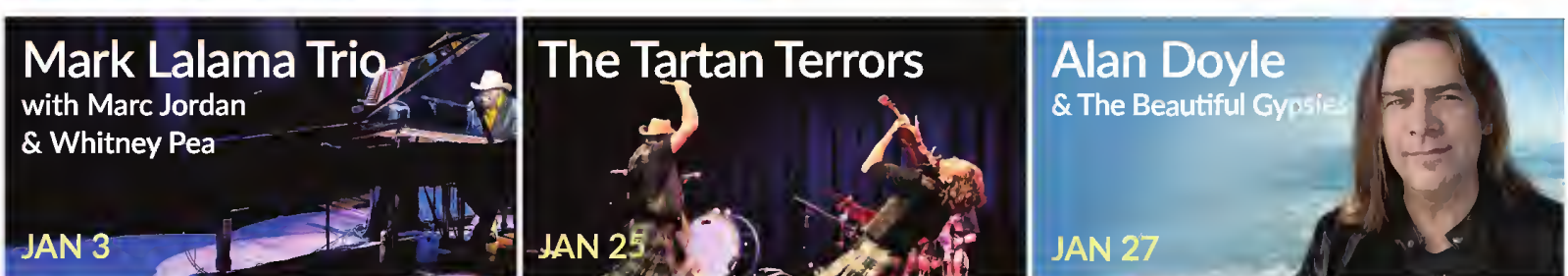
With those memhers retiring and with Gary Burroughs winning his seat as regional councillor, Mazza was alone and was the hrunt of some nasty hullying in his second term.

This current council has heen a complete travesty of had hehavior with Coun. Mazza facing the heavy brunt of it. This council is, to some of us, the most dysfunctional ever.

And yet here we are mere days away from Christmas – the time when we traditionally look for a new heginning as heralded hy the hirth of Jesus over 2000 years ago. Jesus, who has given us so much, including a new way of heing, a way that he taught includes charity for all, forgiveness and love.

As we approach this most important holiday on our calendar, I pray that this council will emhrace the message of the season and that when council returns in 2016 it will show us the hest it can he.

Bill Auchterlonie
NOTL



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PUBLIC NOTICE
Holiday Hours

Town Municipal Offices will be closed for the holidays at 12:00 noon on Thursday, December 24, 2015, and will re-open at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, January 4, 2016.
During this time, please call 905-468-3278 for Public Works inquiries. If there is an emergency, please call 911.
The Community Centre will be closed as follows:

- Thursday, December 24, 2015 – 12:00 noon
- Friday, December 25, 2015 – All day
- Saturday, December 26, 2015 – All day
- Thursday, December 31, 2015 – 12:00 noon
- Friday, January 1, 2016 – All day

The Holiday Skating Schedule is available on the Town's website at www.notl.org or by visiting the arena.
On behalf of Town Council and staff, we wish all residents a joyous and safe holiday season.

HOLIDAY TRANSIT SCHEDULE
December 24, 2015, to January 1, 2016

Thurs, December 24 (Christmas Eve) – Regular Service
Fri, December 25 (Christmas Day) – **No Service**
Sat, December 26 (Boxing Day) – **No Service**
Sun, December 27 – **No Service**
Mon, December 28 – Regular Service
Tues, December 29 – Regular Service
Wed, December 30 – Regular Service
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Councillor says approved budget process not followed

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

Coun. Martin Mazza was twice thwarted by attempts to gain more time for budget discussions, and although the document was approved by council at its Dec. 16 meeting - he did not support it - he's not about to let the issue drop.

At a Nov. 16 committee of the whole meeting, Mazza suggested that council spend more time reviewing the proposed 2016 budget.

A draft budget had been presented in October, after two afternoon workshops for councillors, and sent back to staff for revisions.

Mazza says he expected an opportunity to look at the revised budget, but realized at the Nov. 16 meeting councillors were not going to see it again until they were expected to approve it at the Dec. 14 council meeting.

When he tried to ask for another look at the budget, be was shut down by Coun. Jim Collard, who interrupted him on what he called a point of order, saying council had approved the budget process as it was laid out by staff.

Collard also suggested it was "ludicrous" for council to have more discussions about the budget, considering some councillors did not attend the workshops held by staff.

When the final budget came back to council for approval Dec. 14, Coun. Paolo Miele, questioning the need for certain expenditures, was told the process was past the point of going over specific lines on the operating and capital budgets.

Mazza chastised Lord Mayor Pat Darte for rushing the important discussion, saying it went to his point of almost a month ago, that there should have been another opportunity to see the revised budget before it came to council for approval.

He has since had an opportunity to go over the 285-page report that outlined the budget process, and is convinced the timeline council approved Oct. 26 included a presentation on the revised budget at tbe Nov. 16 meeting, when he was shut down for asking about it.

He outlined his concerns to town director of operations Sheldon Randall, calling the budget approval process "flawed."

Lost in the "side shows" of two meetings, he said, is the fact that the timelines set out and recommended by town staff and adopted by council were not followed.

Coun. Martin Mazza

Randall's emailed response included a chart that showed the revised budget would be presented at the Nov. 16 meeting "if required," and an information report to councillors that showed revisions of the budget to be presented at the Dec. 14 council meeting.

"From my perspective it would appear this was the original intent of council that staff has followed," said Randall in his email.

"Every attempt has been made to make an open and transparent process that has provided numerous opportunities for engagement. As discussed at the last council meeting where council thanked staff for all of their efforts which was described as 'the most robust process in many years.'"

But Mazza maintains the words "if required" were not in the report that council approved, and to him, that's an important distinction indicating the process as agreed upon was not followed.

"I want to know when those words were added and who decided the meeting was not required," he said.

When council reconvenes in January, he says he will push to have the matter investigated by the provincial ministry of municipal affairs or the ombudsman.

If it turns out he was wrong - if anyone can point out a reference in the lengthy report to the budget presentation only "if required," Mazza said he would be glad to apologize.

Although he was denied the apology he had requested from Collard for interrupting his request for further discussion and the comment that it was "ludicrous," Mazza says he's put that behind him and is focusing on the future.

His reason for pursuing what he considers to be an error in process on an important issue, he said, is to ensure that in the future, town staff follow procedures as dictated by council.

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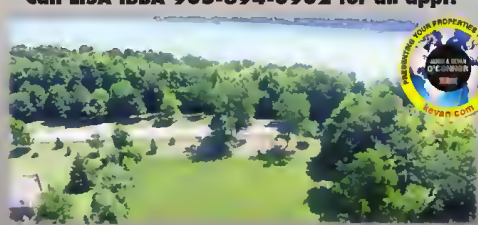

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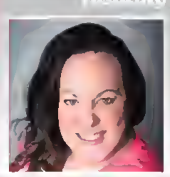

Michelle Reynolds

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Sewage treatment plant on schedule and budget, council told

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

The new $43 million wastewater treatment facility under construction on Lakeshore Road in Niagara-on-the-Lake is on time, on budget and expected to be completed a year from now.

At the request of the town council, Gary Burroughs, NOTL's regional councillor, came to the last council meeting to provide an update on a regional tax policy change, but said he couldn't miss an opportunity to talk about the progress of the sewage treatment plant construction.

The current capacity of the existing facility is 5,710 cubic metres per day. The flow of the new facility at build-out is expected to be 12,000 cubic metres per day, more than double the current capacity, Burroughs said.

The limited capacity of the existing plant has curtailed development in NOTL in recent years, and has also caused a foul odour that was annoying to residents living in the Garrison Village area of NOTL. The odour problem has at least been remedied while construction is underway, said Burroughs.

The new facility is being funded equally by the federal government, the province and the region, he reminded council.

There are other issues to be resolved regarding the project, he added, including the decommissioning of the existing lagoons, which requires a federal environmental assessment.

The first of three public meeting on the decommissioning was held recently, and although Burroughs said he would have liked more information, "it's a very orchestrated process," and the next meeting is the one that should set out three or four alternatives, and ask for input from residents.

"This is our opportunity to determine the future use" of the property, he said.

The Harmony Group, formed several years ago to lobby for a natural heritage park on the property and to oppose a music festival then under discussion, is still favoring a constructed wetland, Burroughs said.

The decommissioning is estimated to cost $8 million to 10 million, he said.

Burroughs tells council he wanted meetings open

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

Gary Burroughs, regional councillor for Niagara-on-tbe-Lake, told town council he agrees with the provincial ombudsman ruling that a regional closed-door meeting of a long-term care task force, which both he and Lord Mayor Pat Darte attended, contravened the open meeting provision of the Municipal Act, as well as the Region's procedural bylaw.

Burroughs says be had suggested open meetings for the task force, but was voted down.

Harry Schlange, Niagara's chief administrative officer, said the meeting was closed to provide opportunity for competitive private-sector information to be disclosed, to find "more creative ways to look at affordability and at the same time provide the best service to our seniors."

But Ontario ombudsman Barbara Finlay ruled the May 13 meeting was illegally closed to the public.

Public notice of the meeting was not provided, no procedure was followed to close the meeting to the public, the task force's discussion did not fall within any of the closed-meeting exceptions, Finlay's ruling said, and neither the agenda nor the minutes of the meeting were made public.

The task force was established to look at alternative service delivery options for three Niagara long-term care homes — Linhaven in St. Catharines, Upper Canada Lodge in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Gilmore Lodge in Fort Erie.

Burroughs says he is still very much concerned about and interested in the future of Upper Canada Lodge, the region's long-term care bome in Niagara-on-the-Lake, which requires extensive work and is under the microscope.

He was at the home recently for its Christmas party, and told council it's a "wonderful operation and a pride in our community."

The Nov. 13 meeting was intended to bring councillors, staff and industry experts together, Schlange said.

"We felt this was a very innovative approach — collaborating with council, staff, as well as the not-for-profit and private sector on some possible solutions."

During that collaboration there "would be disclosure of commercial information that is proprietary to those individuals," Schlange said.

"We wanted the opportunity that they would disclose some of that competitive information in closed sessions."

There were no industry representatives present at the May 13 meeting.

In attendance were task force chair and Niagara Falls Coun. Bart Maves, Burroughs, Darte, St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sendzik and five staff members.

During that meeting three industry experts were approved to be added to the task force.

Schlange said the Region is taking the ombudsman's recommendations "quite seriously" and will be working with the task force to ensure rules are abided by going forward.

The region has published the minutes online athttp://bit.ly/1NpdbEd.

With files from Postmedia Network

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1 KENT STREET $549,000

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17 LOWER CANADA DRIVE $461,999

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Council moving toward health hub location decision

Penny Coles
Niagara Advance

The steering committee looking at health care delivery in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake needs to move forward with a decision on a location for a health huh, hut is running into difficulty narrowing a list of 12 possihilities, says town councillor Terry Flynn.

He was recently appointed to the health services steering committee, which was formed in 2013 with memhers representing various levels of health care in Niagara.

Flynn was brought on hoard to represent Niagara EMS, where he works as a supervisor.

The steering committee looking at a health huh for Niagara-on-the-Lake is moving closer to its goal, hut needs some professional help to get there, he said.

The model they envision includes private businesses such as a pharmacy, X-ray services and medical lah paying rent, along with the doctors, and a not-for-profit board that would cover the costs of the agencies the health huh should include to best serve the community

The Town gave the committee $30,000 in July to hire a consultant to put all the information that has been compiled by the committee into one report, and that work has been done, said Flynn, hut the next step will likely include a consultant to help narrow down a location.

He and committee chair Maria Bau-Coote, also a town councillor, along with two other committee memhers, Dr. Karen Berti and Brenda Jones, president of the NOTL Hospital Foundation, recently visited Langs Community Health Centre in Camhridge, Ont. The neighbourhood-based organization provides everything from physicians' offices to social services, as well as youth, seniors, fitness, hreakfast and lunch programs - all the Niagara-on-the-Lake steering committee has envisioned for its health huh, and much more, said Flynn.

He was very impressed with what he saw, he said.

Lord Mayor Pat Darte and other councillors will visit the centre in the new year, so that when the discussion of a health huh comes hack to council, they'll be prepared, Flynn said.

During a council discussion ahout the road trip last week, Coun. Paolo Miele asked that the plans of developer Anthony Annunziata, who hought Ward Simpson's Niagara Medical Centre building on Niagara Stone Road in June, he considered. Annunziata proposes to expand the building to meet the needs of a health huh, Miele said.

It's up to the developer to make an official presentation to the town, said Darte, who explained that the trip to Camhridge was just for information as council moves forward.

The Langs centre, founded in 1978, has grown to meet the needs of its community, and has become such a model for health care that its director holds regular open houses to show health care providers and municipal representatives from across the province what a health huh can look like, said Flynn.

It receives its funding from four levels of government.

He helieves it's important for councillors to visit the Camhridge centre hefore deciding how to proceed in NOTL.

"All I could think ahout when I saw it was our community centre, with physicians on site," said Flynn, who was the chair of the NOTL committee that worked for a decade to get the community centre built.

"But that's my vision - there are a lot of options open to us," he said, including the NOTL hospital site, which others on the committee favour, or a private or puhlic/private development. There are other developers in addition to Annunziata who would like to build a health huh in NOTL, he said.

Of the 12 sites on the steering committee list, there are hoth municipal and private properties, and each of the "key players at the tahle," including representatives from the NOTL Family Health Team, Niagara Health System and Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN), hrings their own perspective to that discussion, he says.

Town coun. Terry Flynn

"Our steering committee is too close to the issue. We all have our differences of opinions of where it should he. We need some impartial, ohjective help to move forward," said Flynn.

"We have to look at what's hest for the community."

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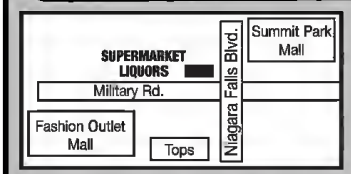

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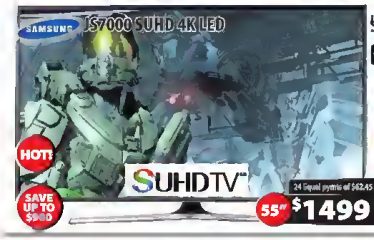

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- Colorprime with Nano Spectrum

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NL300 Nightlife Tower Speakers

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This package includes:
- (2) - TSX440 Floor Standing Speakers
- (1) - TSX150C Center Speaker
- (2) - TSX110 Bookshelf Speakers
- (1) - PSW10 10" Powered Subwoofer
- (1) - Denon AVRS700 "B Stock" Receiver

SAVE $1089

ALL 7 PCS!

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$1299

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NEW!

The freedom of wireless streaming, the performance of Paradigm

This system includes:
- Room 1 (1) Paradigm PW800 Wireless Speaker
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ALL 8 PIECES!

SAVE $531

24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST $27.87/MTH

$669

Klipsch RP-280 Home Theater Speaker System

24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST*

- (2) RP-280F Dual "B" Floorstanding Speakers
- (1) RP-450C Quad 5.25" Center Speaker
- (2) RP-250S 5.25" Surround Speakers
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REG $6,950

SAVE $1451

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Perfectly Matched BIG Home Theatre System

SAMSUNG JU7500 SERIES 4K CURVED UHDTV

SAMSUNG
- 4K Curved UHDTV
- 240 Motion Rate
- 3D Capable
- WiFi Built in

Curved UHDTV

55" $11899

DENON AVRX7200W 9.2 Channel Dolbyatmos Receiver
- Wifi, Bluetooth
- Dolby Atmos
- 1350 Watts of Power
- Powered Multiroom Audio Out
- 8 HDMI Inputs 3 Outputs

65" $12999

Klipsch RP-280 5.1.4 Dolby Atmos System

This is the pinnacle of home theatre technology. Experience the full Dolby Atmos experience with overhead sound, state-of-the-art audio reverse and high-performance acoustic technology.

Be completely immersed in your movies and music.

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- (1) RP-450CA Center Speaker-Black
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78" $16899

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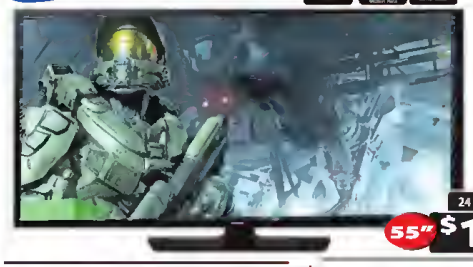
SAMSUNG UN55JU6400



- 120 HZ
- 4K Ultra HD
- Built-in Wifi

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Samsung SMART TV

- Full 1080P
- Smart TV Wifi Built in

24 equal pmts of $24.95

48" $599

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SAVE $475

- WiFi Built In
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- 2 HDMI Outputs
- USB Outputs

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SAVE $450

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SONY

SAVE UP TO $500

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It isn't magic. It's technology that's indistinguishable from magic.

Sony Android TV with Google Play

LG UF8300 SERIES ULTRA 4K HDTV

LG ULTRA HDTV

- 4K Ultra UHDTV
- Quad Core Processor
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12 ONLY!

SAVE $800

Marshall Kilburn Portable Bluetooth Speaker

NEW PRODUCT

- 7.2 channel network audio/video surround
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- Reg. $999

24 equal pmts of $22.88 **$549**

4K ULTRA HD
4K Ultra HD TV XBR49X830C — 24 payments of $54.13 **$1299**
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Experience perfect pictures by new 4K processor
*Compatible with Android and IOS devices
Your smart TV just got smarter!

- Wifi built in
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24 payments of $70.79 **$1699** 58" 4K
58UF8300

- 20 hours of portable capability
- Bluetooth connectivity
- Classic Marshall design
- Available in black or cream
- Or use auxiliary in jack

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SONY
HAP-S1B "B-Stock"
500 GB Hi-Res Music Player System

- 500 GB hard drive for music playback
- Wifi built in
- 40 WX2 class A8 Amplifier
- Playback of DSD & full range hires for mats

SAVE $450 — 6 ONLY! — 24 PYMTS $22.80/mth **$549**

SAMSUNG J6300 LED Smart HDTV

24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST*
- Full HD 1080P
- Micro Dimming Pro
- 120 Motion Rate

55" 24 payments of $41.62 **$899**
60" ON SALE!
65" ON SALE!
75" 24 payments of $104.12 **$2499**

SAMSUNG JU7100 4K Flat Smart HDTV

SAVE up to $1,100
- Quad Core
- 240 HZ Motion Rate
- UHD 4K 8m Pixels
- Wifi, Smart TV, 3D

55" 24 payments of $66.62 **$1599**
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65" ON SALE!
75" ON SALE!

audio-technica. AT-LP60-USB LP-to-digital recording system

6 ONLY!
- USB output-connects directly to your computer for plug & play use
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24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST $6.21/MTH **$149** SAVE $80

D. SoloCinema Studio

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GIBBY'S EXCLUSIVE!
- 5.1 channel powered home theater
- 200 Watts of Power
- 5 Wireless Subwoofer
- 3 Tweeters, 6 midwoofers

24 equal pymts $41.62/mth **$999** SAVE $760

SAMSUNG JS9000 Series Curved SUHDTV

24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST*
- 4K SUHDTV
- Curved Screen
- 240 Motion
- Wifi Built In

55" SPECIAL INSTORE PRICING OR PHONE SALE PRICING CALL 1-877-761-6354 TO ORDER BY PHONE!
65" 24 Equal PYMTS of $145.79* **$3499**

SAMSUNG JS9500 Series SUHDTV

SAVE BIG $$$ AT GIBBY'S
- 4K SUHD 3840 x 2160 LED panel
- Clear motion rate 240
- Nano crystal technology
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65" 78" 88"

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- Grilamid TR® Frame
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Paradigm / SONY 135" Huge Home Theatre System

SAVE $2030 — ALL 6 PIECES! — 24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST $31.94/MTH **$7650**

SONY VPL-HW 40ES 3D Projector
- Up to 300" screen size
- High brightness
- 3D Readable
- Grandview 135" 4K Curved Fixed Frame Screen

SONY STRZA2000ES 7.2 Channel Receiver
- 7x95 watt receiver
- 6 HDMI Input
- 4K Ready

Paradigm Monitor 11 V.7x2 Tower Speakers (pair)
- Monitor Center TV 7 (1)
- Monitor Surround 3V 7 (2)
- Monitor Sub 12 (1)

SAMSUNG JS8600 Series
- 4k SUHDTV
- Nano dot Crystal Technology
- Motion rate 240
- 3D Capable

SAVE UP TO $1000 — SAVE $2500
78" 24 Equal PYMTS of $249.95* **ON SALE**

LG 55" EG9100 Series OLED TV

LG OLED TV redefines television and recreates reality with perfection. Meet the TV of your dreams.
Perfect Black. Intense Colour

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- 6.1" Control Oisplay
- 50 Watts x 4
- Built-in Navigation with 3D & 2D Mapping
- Bluetooth Hands-Free Calling

9 ONLY! SAVE $25

24 Equal PYMTS $31.20*/mth

$749

- "B Stock"
- 5-Channel Amplifier
- 350 Watts of Power
- Built-in Bluetooth

14 ONLY! SAVE $186

24 Equal PYMTS $8.29

$199

polk Dual Voice Coil Subwoofer

- Incredible sound, affordable price
- 570 Watts Power Handling
- Dual Voicecoils
- Four layer vented voice coil "B Stock"

LIMIT 4 PER CUSTOMER!

12" SAVE $95 **$65.99**

10" SAVE $90 **$59.99**

70% OFF MSRP

*See store for details

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Professional Onsite Certified Installation! Book yours now!

- (2) BP-8060S1 Superlowers with built-in powered subwoofers
- (1) S-8040HD High Definition center speaker
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24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST 247.56*

$2099

Marshall Acton

"A Force to be Reckoned With!"

- Small instature... serious power
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- Available in black or cream

NEW PRODUCT

24 Equal Pymts $10.79/mth

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polk 500-LS In-Ceiling Speaker

18 ONLY!

- Smallest Diameter Full Range 2 Way Driver Speaker The Size of A Light Fixture
- "B Stock"

Reg. $475 ea

$129 ea SAVE $346

DENON & JBL HOME THEATRE SYSTEM

GIBBY'S EXCLUSIVE!

24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST*

- JBL Nightlife Home Theatre Package & Denon AVR 5700 "B" Stock receiver with GoogleCast.

Included in this bundle:
- (1) JBL NL100 Nightlife 5" Center Channel Speaker
- (1) JBL NL150 Nightlife 10" Powered Subwoofer
- (2) JBL NL200 Nightlife Bookshelf Speakers
- (2) JBL NL300 Nightlife Tower Speakers
- (1) Denon AVS700 "B" Stock Receiver

SAVE $1,849

REG $2,999

24 equal pymts $47.87*/mth

$1149

polk / SONY AV In-Wall Theatre Package

What's Included in this Bundle:
- (1) Polk Audio VS-2SSC-LS "B Stock" In-Wall Center Speaker
- (4) Polk Audio VS 500-LS "B Stock" In-Ceiling Loud Speakers
- (1) Sony STR-ZA2000ES 7.2 Channel Full 4K Ultra HD 3D A/V Receiver

Reg. $3,919

SAVE $2520

24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST*

24 Equal PYMTS $58.29/mth

$1399

polk LSIM707 Flagship Toner Speakers

SAVE $1131 EA

24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST*

- Polk Dynamic Sound Engine
- 4 Way Design for Clear Sound
- Blk on Cherry
- "B Stock"

24 Equal PYMTS $35.37

REG. $1,980 ea

$899 ea

SONY VPLHW55ES Projector + 120" Fixed Frame Screen Bundle

LIMITED QUANTITIES

- Grandview Cyber Series Fixed Frame 16:9 Projector Screen
- 100,000:1 dynamic contrast
- 1700 Lumens brightness
- Full HD & 3D

SAVE $2300

24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST*

24 Equal PYMTS $158.29

$3699

polk / marantz Home Theater Package

What's Included in this bundle:
- (2) Polk Audio LSiM70S Black 'B Stock' Floorstanding Speakers
- (2) Polk Audio LSiM702F/X Black 'B Stock' Surround Sound Speakers
- (1) Polk Audio LSiM706 Black 'B Stock' Center Channel Speaker
- (1) Marantz SR-5010 7.2 Channel Full 4K Ultra HD A/V Receiver with Wi-Fi and Bluetooth

24 EQUAL PAYMENTS NO INTEREST*

Reg. $8,715

24 Equal PYMTS $166.63

SAVE $4716

$3999

polkaudio DB Series 2 Way Car Speakers

36 ONLY!

- NeoDymium Tweeter Magnet
- Kapton Voice Coil
- Up to 180 Watt Peak Power Handling
- "B Stock"

DB 521 5.25"
DB 571 5x7"
DB 651 6.5"

Your Choice **$49.99** Pair SAVE $100

DENON DSB-150 Tabletop Bluetooth Wireless Speaker

LIMIT 3 PER CUSTOMER

- Dual 3.5" Full Range Drivers
- Bluetooth Audio Streaming
- One-Touch NFC Pairing
- Supports aptx Audio Codes
- "B Stock"

$109.99 SAVE $140

Marshall Major II Over Ear Headphones

- Massive Marshall Legacy
- Super soft ear cushions
- Collapsible construction
- Mic & remote
- Available in black or white

24 Equal Pymts $4.13/mth

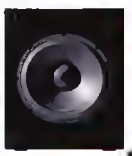
$99 SAVE $25

Klipsch R6i In-Ear Headphones

- Legendary sound and great fit!
- Form, function & style
- Available in black or white

$77 SAVE $32

JBL NL150 Nightlife 150 Watt 10" Powered Subwoofer



CLEAROUT DEAL WHILE THEY LAST!

- Features 8 OHM impedance with built in amplifier

61% OFF!

24 Equal Pymts $8.29/mth

SAVE $351

$199

SONY HTCT780 2.1 Channel Sound Bar with Subwoofer

SAVE $200

10 ONLY!

- S Master Digital Amplifier
- Bluetooth connectivity
- Stream & control from your smart phone

24 Pymts, No Interest, $12.45/Mth*

$299

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Wednesday, Dec 30	10am - 9pm

MasterCard VISA AMERICAN EXPRESS Interac PayPal

CANADIAN TIRE

BOXING DAY 3-DAY WEEKEND SALE!

2 DAYS ONLY SATURDAY, DEC. 26 & SUNDAY, DEC. 27

In Winkler and Steinbach, 30X will run on Sat., Dec. 26 and Mon., Dec. 28.

Exclusive for Canadian Tire Options® MasterCard® & Options® World MasterCard® Cardholders

30X e-CT 'MONEY'™

My Canadian Tire 'Money'™

See back cover of this 4-page flyer for details. No rainchecks on 30X. In-store only

SATURDAY TO MONDAY, DECEMBER 26-28, 2015

In Winkler and Steinbach, the sale will run on Sat., Mon. & Tues., Dec. 26, 28 & 29.

Hurry In! While quantities last. Sorry, no rainchecks. Check your local store for holiday hours.

SATURDAY DEC 26, ONLY! DOORCRASHER

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SYLVANIA 32" LED HDTV. 1366 x 768p resolution. 2 HDMI ports and 60Hz. 299-4414-2.

SAVE $20

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2 **SAVE 25% 10.49 aa SELECTEO 18-CDUNT KEURIG PDDS.** 53-4329X. Reg 13.99

SAVE 75%

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*If bought separately, our Reg price for cookset is $699.99 and wok Reg price is $139.99

SAVE $100

NOW **98.88**

BDSCH 18V LI-IDN DRILL. 2-speed: 0-400/1300 RPM. Keyless chuck. Includes 2 batteries and charger. 54-2817-8. Reg 199.99

SAVE 25%

4-PACK

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*If bought separately, our Reg price is $4.49/each jug

SAVE 70%

NOW **529.99**

HDRIZDN CT5.4 TREAOMILL. 2.25-CHP motor. 20 x 55" PerfectFLEX deck. 84-0517-2. Reg 1899.99

SAVE $200

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17' MULTI-TASK LADDER. Converts to a step, extension, offset ladder and twin "A" frames. Grade 1A. Up to 300-lb capacity. 81-1055-8. Reg 299.99

SAVE UP TO 80% on items on this page

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LAGOSTINA BIANCO 2-PACK FRYPANS. 26cm and 30cm sizes. White ceramic, non-stick interior. Induction suitable. 199-6963-0.

*If bought separately, our Reg price for 28cm frypan is $99.99 and 30cm frypan Reg price is $119.99.

SAVE 80%

Mastercraft

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100-PC SCREWDRIVER SET. Includes magnetic parts tray, demolition driver and more. Ergonomic rubber grips. 57-3685-6. Reg 129.99

7.99 MASTERCRAFT 20-PC SCREWDRIVER SET. Ergonomic rubber handles. 57-3572-6. Reg 39.99

SAVE 70%

Mastercraft 2-PACK

SPECIAL BUY **27.99***

AIR COMPRESSOR HOSE, 2-PACK. Lightweight, tough and highly flexible. ⅜" x 50', 300 PSI max. 299-1990-6.

*If bought separately, our Reg price is $54.99 each hose

SAVE 70%

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OUTBOUND

NOW **69.99**

OUTBOUND 6-PIECE SPINNER LUGGAGE SET. Includes 27" upright spinner, 20" upright, 24" rolling duffel, 20" duffel, 21.5" tote and 9" toiletry kit. 76-2889-4. Reg 269.99

SAVE 70%

NOMA

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6-OUTLET POWER BAR. Two USB charging ports. 1A, 1500 joule surge protection. 52-2460-8. Reg 39.99

SAVE 65%

OBUSFORME

NOW **34.99**

OBUS FORME HEAT AND MASSAGE CUSHION. 32-1483-8. Reg 99.99

SAVE 65%

KitchenAid

NOW **9.49**

KITCHENAID 3-PC MIXING BOWL SET. Nest for easy storage. 142-5141-8. Reg 29.99

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Bullet News Niagara comes to end of five–year run

Bullet News Niagara is ceasing operations.

The media outlet will publish its final online edition Dec. 31.

The decision to end Bullet's five-year run was a difficult one that has been considered for some time, company president Jessica Friesen said by phone Wednesday.

"It's the right decision at this time."

The news industry is "not doing well," she said, calling it "extremely difficult" to be an independent in the business.

"Given the current state of the news publishing industry, especially continued competition for advertising revenue posed by the increasing dominance of social media platforms, it has become apparent continued operation of an independent local news platform was no longer viable," Friesen added in a news release issued by Bullet Wednesday afternoon, one day after staff learned of the closure.

Bullet News was founded in October 2010 to provide news coverage across Niagara. The company currently employs four people, Friesen said.

"We've had a good run of it. We have some fantastic staff," she said.

"I'm very proud of the quality of product that they've put together. This is not a reflection of the quality of papers that we've put together."

Friesen commended staff for their "years of service, their professionalism and their passion for journalism."

She also thanked advertisers and readers for their support.

The news came less than a week after Hamilton-based broadcaster CHCH, which also provides coverage in Niagara region, announced a massive restructuring of local news.

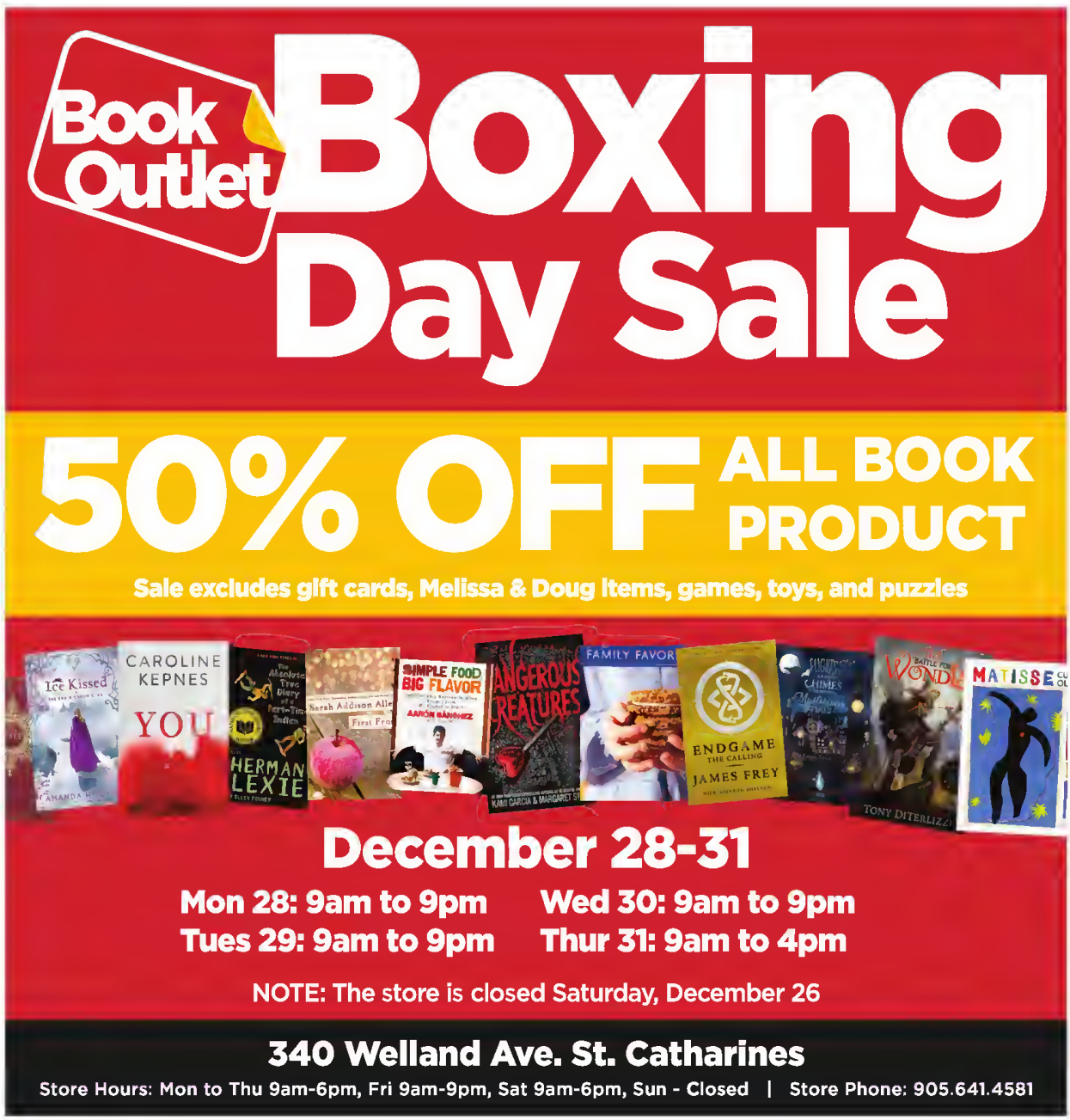
At least 129 full-time employees and close to 30 part-timers were let go as a result, and 58 employees were given new offers of employment.

CHCH's parent compa Channel Zero said programming would be reduced to 17.5 hours per week.

Channel 11, the holding company for CHCH, has also filed for bankruptcy.

CHCH first hit the airwaves in 1954, covering the Hamilton, Halton and Niagara region, but the station has faced financial turbulence over the past decade.

With files from Postmedia Network



RIDE stops 500 vehicles, no arrests

Niagara Regional Police officers stopped approximately 500 vehicles Monday as part of the Holiday Ride program, but made no arrests.

Of those stopped during the afternoon and evening in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Niagara Falls, two drivers were administered an breath test for alcohol consumption and found to be fit to operate their vehicles.

Two other drivers were ticketed, one a class G1 driver for not having a class G licensed driver seated beside him.

As the festive season continues, the NRP remains committed to reducing impaired driving offences through education and the apprehension of offenders through enforcement programs like RIDE.

Impaired driving is still the leading criminal offence causing deaths in Canada.

This initiative has been made possible in part as a result of grant funding from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services as part of the Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) program.

COMMISSO'S FRESH FOODS

Celebrate a New Year with Commisso's!

Fresh Baked from Scratch
Sausage Buns
6/1.99

Fresh Store Made
Mild *or* Hot Italian Sausage
Family Pack
2.99/lb
6.59/kg

Commisso's BARBEQUE READY!

Fresh *California*
Seedless Oranges
Product of USA
2.99
3lb. bag

Fresh, Lean & Meaty
Pork Back Ribs
Family Pack
4.99/lb
11.00/kg

San Pellegrino
Carbonated Mineral Water
12.99
12x750ml
SAVE $5.00

Lavazza
Ground Coffee
Assorted Varieties
5.99
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Thursday Dec 24: 7am-6pm
Christmas Day & Boxing Day - CLOSED

Sale prices in effect Sunday Dec. 27 through Thursday Dec. 31, 2015

FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU
CLOSED	CLOSED	27	28	29	30	31

6161 Thorold Stone Rd., Niagara Falls, ON
Mon-Fri 7am-8pm • Sat 7am-7pm • Sun 8am-6pm

American tourists returning, Thomson says

Ray Spiteri
Postmedia Network

Niagara Parks has opened its arms to welcome the world.

And a big part of that world is a greater influx of Americans flowing across the border spurred on by a lower loonie.

To cap off what has been an "excellent year" — one of the best in years for the Niagara Parks Commission — officials were told of some impressive statistics during their last meeting of 2015.

As part of a customer satisfaction survey, which included feedback from nearly 1,700 visitors between May and August, commissioners learned more than 60 languages were used by visitors to Niagara Parks this year.

"We know it's an international audience, but that really strikes you — the responsibility to communicate and engage with people," said Janice Thomson, chairwoman of the parks commission.

"Speaking (that many) different languages is quite immense, but that just shows how many people are drawn here, the No. 1 reason being to see the falls."

Almost 50 per cent of respondents — 48.8 per cent — came from the United States, up from the 36.7 per cent polled in 2014. Nearly 21 per cent — 20.8 per cent — came from outside North America, up from 16.6 per cent in 2014, while 30.4 per cent came from Canada, down from 46.7 per cent in 2014.

The average group size of visitors was 3.6 persons, which was the same as 2014, while 63 per cent of respondents were male and 37 per cent female.

The survey indicated most of the respondents had been to Niagara Falls before — 61.8 per cent, compared to 51 per cent in 2014.

Niagara Parks saw nearly a nearly 12 per cent increase in the number of visitors who stayed overnight for three days — 45.8 per cent in 2015 compared to 34 per cent in 2014.

Nearly half of the survey participants — 48 per cent — were familiar with Niagara Parks, while 97 per cent were "very likely" to recommend Niagara Parks to family or friends.

Aside from the falls itself, attractions such as Journey Behind the Falls, Horn blower Niagara Cruises and the Butterfly Conservatory scored favourably with respondents.

Niagara Parks' trails also had a good year. More than 105,000 visitors used the Niagara Glen in 2015, up from 93,000 in 2014.

Tourism officials have said this past summer was the best season in years, with many businesses and hotels reporting significant increases in business from last summer.

Several things fell into place, including the strength of the American dollar.

"It was an excellent year for the Niagara Parks Commission," said Thomson.

"All of our sites saw increased levels of business. We saw people spending more time — the overnights are up, so for the whole destination that's very good news."

The Niagara Parks Commission has properties in NOTL, including McFarland House and the Laura Secord Homestead. Rebecca Pascoe, manager-curator ofMcFarland House shows what a Victorian Christmas night might look like in the 1850s.

Mike DiBattista/ Postmedia Network

TOP STORIES. LOCAL NEWS. FIND IT ONLINE:
NIAGARAADVANCE.CA
niagara advance

Holiday Waste Management Services

HOLIDAY CHANGES IN WASTE COLLECTION

Garbage, recycling and Green Bin collection will be deferred by one day on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Regular Waste Collection Day	Changed to:
Friday (Dec. 25)	Saturday (Dec. 26)
Friday (Jan. 1)	Saturday (Jan. 2)

HOLIDAY GARBAGE EXEMPTIONS

In the week following Christmas (Dec. 26, 28, 29, 30, 31), residents may place double their regular weekly garbage limit to the curb on their collection day.

CHRISTMAS TREE COLLECTION

- Saturday, Jan. 9, 2016 ONLY
- Christmas trees must be at the curb by 7 a.m.
- Remove all ornaments and decorations
- Christmas trees wrapped in plastic or buried in snow will not be collected. No artificial trees.

Niagara Region

niagararegion.ca/waste
Waste Info-Line 905-356-4141
or toll-free: 1-800-594-5542

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ADVANCE Notices COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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ANY EVENT
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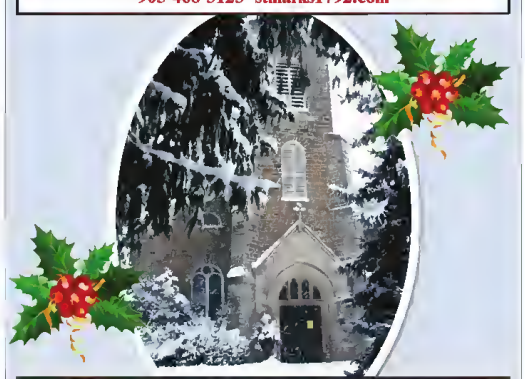
41 BYRON STREET, NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE
905-468-3123 stmarks1792.com



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Wed. Dec 30th 9am – 5:30pm, Thu. Dec 31st 9am – 3pm,
Fri. Jan 1 CLOSED Sat. Jan 2nd 9:30am – 5pm, Sun. Jan 3rd 11 – 4pm

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January 6, 2015

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Losing battle for Parliament Oak was tough for MPP

Ray Spiteri
Postmedia Network

He may be an MPP for a third-place party, but Wayne Gates is pleased with his first two years as the Niagara Falls riding's representative at Queen's Park.

"The toughest (part) is the time away from your family. But I am absolutely thrilled and honoured to be the MPP for Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"I look forward to getting up in the morning, going to work and making a difference for my riding."

Gates was elected MPP during the February 2014 byelection to replace Liberal MPP Kim Craitor, who resigned in September 2013 citing mental exhaustion.

For the first time in 19 years, the Niagara Falls riding went orange. It remained that colour following the general provincial election in June 2014, as Gates, who was previously a Niagara Falls city councillor, held on to his seat.

Since then, the past president of Unifor Local 199 union has been a backbencher for the NDP, which has the third-most seats in the Ontario legislature, behind the governing Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives, who are the official opposition.

Gates doesn't see the Niagara Falls riding's current situation as a hindrance.

"I don't believe it's hurting my riding at all that I'm an NDPer. I have earned their respect."

Gates says he often talks to Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne and several of her key ministers.

"They see me coming and they don't run away."

He says as an opposition MPP, it's important to go before government members with "fact-based" information, backed by local support.

"You have to raise legitimate issues, earn their respect and trust, and show them that what you're fighting for is in the best interest of your riding, not because of some self-serving political reason. They see through that."

Gates says for Niagara, and Ontario, to prosper, government leaders of all political stripes have to work together.

He says proof of co-operation can be seen with the ongoing GO train file in Niagara, where local politicians, who may have different political leanings, are unified in their push to see daily, year-round commuter train service in the region.

"I talk to (St. Catharines Liberal MPP) Jim Bradley all the time, especially about GO. We want to find a way, together, to make this a reality."

Gates says he was an early supportive of, and fought for, bringing year-round GO train service to Niagara during the 2014 byelection.

It's now the No. 1 issue for politicians in Niagara and a business case has been presented to the provincial government.

Gates says he's glad to see Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. take another step toward a new 5,000 to 7,000-seat entertainment centre in Niagara Falls by announcing a request for pre-qualification.

Gates says he keeps in touch with the minister of health and the Niagara Health System regarding the ongoing planning process for a new south Niagara hospital proposed on the outskirts of Niagara Falls.

Gates says he has been a long-time supporter of the Fort Erie Race Track, which after years of uncertainty is seeing growth.

"We still need more (race) dates and we need to bring back the slots, and that's something I have been working on, and will continue to work on. We need to secure those 700 jobs and that's why the slots are so important."

Gates says he has worked with town, regional and provincial officials on the proposed $400-million Canadian Motor Speedway development in Fort Erie.

After a lengthy study by the Ministry of Transportation, speedway officials were told in October it will not have to upgrade to a four-lane structure at the Queen Elizabeth Way, and that a two-lane Bowen Road/QEW interchange will be sufficient as long as certain conditions are met.

"That's more jobs for Niagara and hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and indirect investment."

In Niagara-on-the-Lake, Gates says he has talked a lot about supporting local farmers, wineries and craft brewers.

"They had a really good year last year, and there's a heightened awareness of the craft-beer industry. It's great to see the growth with Niagara College's teaching brewery. Students are getting that education right here in Niagara.

"A lot of good things are happening, and have the potential to happen, in the Niagara Falls riding."

Gates introduced two private member's bills in 2015, both of which passed second reading.

MPP Wayne Gates

One would create a right of passage along the shoreline of the Great Lakes. The second would introduce a new section to the Highway Traffic Act that would strengthen penalties for drivers who cause, or contribute to causing, death or serious injury while violating the act.

Gates says his one disappointment as an MPP so far is not being able to convince the government to keep Parliament Oak Public School open in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The District School Board of Niagara decided to consolidate the school with Crossroads Public School.

"That was the first issue the residents of Niagara-on-the-Lake put their trust in me and I put every ounce of energy into it. I was really disappointed, and I felt for all those families that did such an incredible job making their case so professionally. That was tough."

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Region commits $25K to aid Syrian refugees

Maryanne Firth
Postmedia Network

Niagara Region wants to lead by example.

To encourage public donations to aid Syrian refugees, regional council has committed upward of $25,000 to the cause.

The Region will match dollars donated by the public to the Mennonite Central Committee's Refugee Resettlement Fund Niagara, which will support Syrian families as they arrive to the area.

The request for support was brought to the table by Regional Chair Alan Caslin at the Oct. 1 council meeting and was supported unanimously.

The $25,000 will come from the Chair's office budget.

"Whenever there's a call for help I've always known Niagara to step up to the plate," Caslin said, while speaking about the "devastating effects of the crisis in Syria" that have caused thousands of people to flee to neighbouring countries.

"It's important to give people a hand and reach out when we can."

Both Region of Waterloo and City of Kitchener have committed funds to the cause, Caslin said. Niagara, he added, passed a similar motion in 2010, committing $50,000 in response to the earthquake in Haiti.

The Canadian government has agreed to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees by September 2016

It has also committed to matching up to $100 million donated to registered Canadian charities in response to the Syrian conflict.

Through the cost-sharing program, Niagara Region's $25,000 commitment will be able to sponsor two families with three members each, Moses Moini, of Mennonite Central Committee told council. Funds will be used to pay for items such as rent, food, clothes, public transportation and education, once the families arrive in Niagara, he said.

MCC was chosen as the organization to receive the funds because "they are on the ground experts and have been working locally and internationally on this issue as their focused priority," Caslin said.

The group, he added, is "already working with all agencies in Niagara on a common goal, so there's no overlap or underlap."

The work that MCC does with refugees is "multipronged," Moini said.

"We provide material aid and humanitarian assistance to Syrians and Iraqi refugees in exile in countries like Jordan and Lebanon and then we also support the internally displaced persons in their countries of origin," he said.

"For those who cannot stay in their countries of origin or in exile, we respond with the resettlement program and assist with sponsoring them to come to Canada."

With countless requests coming its way, the organization is been "working to beef up capacity" to be able to respond appropriately, Moini said.

He credited Caslin for bringing the issue forward and council for putting its support behind the cause.

"Together we can help refugee families find safety and a renewed hope in Canada in less than four months."

Regional chair Alan Caslin

Grimsby Reg. Coun. Tony Quirk called the commitment an "excellent opportunity to show the support that Niagara Region has for the immigrant and refugee community."

He also noted that through Niagara Prosperity Initiative funds are available to organizations to help newcomers to the area.

Further assistance could be provided by landlords within the region, said Brian Heit.

The St. Catharines regional council said he knows of a Niagara Falls apartment owner willing to offer his property to one family. He's hopeful other building owners will come forward to offer their spaces for six months to a year to aid these families in need.

Anyone interested in getting involved can contact the Regional Chair's office for more information.

Caslin has also put out the call to Niagara's 12 municipalities, urging them to get involved in supporting the cause.

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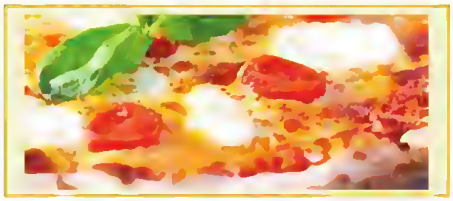
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Holiday RIDE program a sign of the season

Bill Sawchuk
Postmedia Network

With the holiday party season in full swing, Niagara's police officers are busy on the roads — and they hope drivers are getting the message.

"Maybe people are getting smarter," Const. Tom Plato of the Niagara Regional Police said of the RIDE program. "I'm optimistic people are getting the message. I know when we talk to people on the line, 90 percent of them are very supportive of the program."

Police have been fighting the battle for decades. Plato has one thing to say to drivers about drinking and driving. "Just don't do it," he said. "Call a cab. Call a friend."

Out of hundreds of vehicles stopped, Niagara police have laid a total of 30 provincial offences charges at RIDE checks this December. In addition, police arrested two people for drug possession. One person was arrested and charged with driving while disqualified.

Plato said there is more to the RIDE program than arresting impaired drivers and getting them off the road.

"We want people to know we are out there," he said. "We look to see if there are functions going on as a potential area to set up. We also look at where we are going to get the highest traffic volume in some areas. That helps with the educational component."

The spot checks can lead to some interesting arrests, though Plato didn't want to make light of a potentially dangerous situation.

"You have to be very vigilant when you are on the line," he said. "Your head has to be on a swivel. We have incidents where drivers have come through the line, but we haven't had an injury that I'm aware of in the past couple of years."

Niagara Regional Police are busy this time of year with RIDE spot-checks.

On Dec. 13, a driver was arrested and charged with stunt driving after being clocked travelling 124 kilometres-per-hour in a 50 kilometres-per-hour zone on Victoria Ave. in Vineland — by officers on their way to set up a RIDE check.

The driver had bis licence suspended for seven days, and his vehicle was towed and impounded for the same period.

The OPP stopped a lead-footed, impaired driver with open liquor in the car last week. Officers from the Niagara detachment were conducting traffic enforcement on the QEW eastbound when they caught the driver going more than 200 kilometre-per-hour on the QEW through Lincoln at about 1:30 a.m.

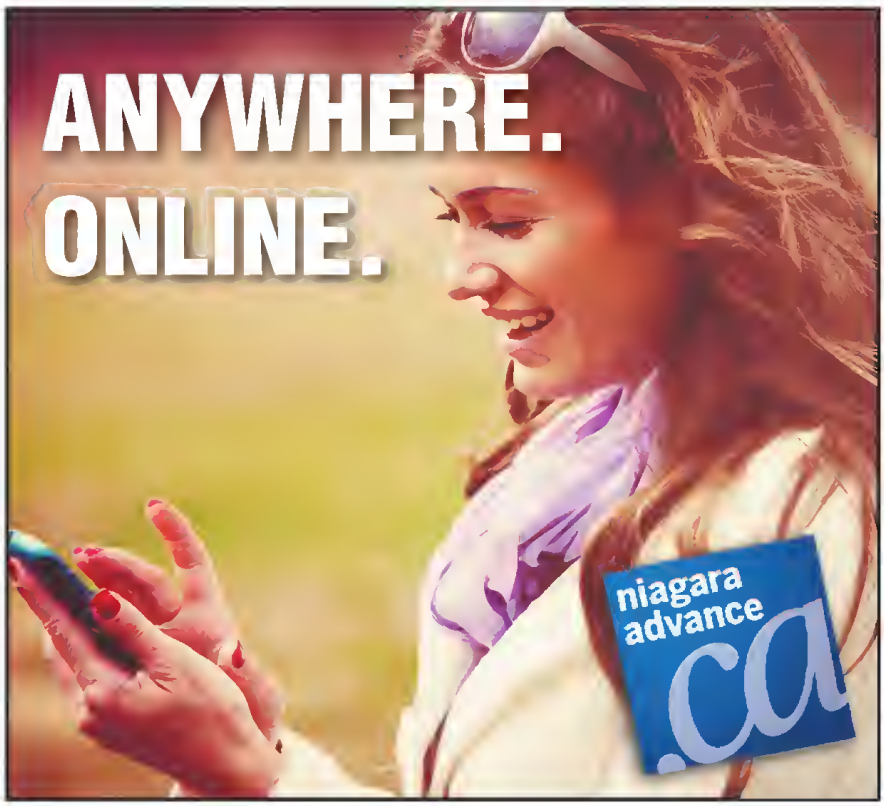
A 25-year-old Markham man was charged with impaired driving, driving over 80 mg alcohol in 100 mL blood, dangerous driving, driving without a licence, racing a motor vehicle and driving with open liquor.

The OPP impounded the vehicle for seven days, and the driver is scbeduled to appear in a St. Catharines court on Feb. 2.

"It was almost comical, but you want to get those people off the road," Plato said. "The OPP had the driver who was going 200 kilometres and hour; and that's scary.

"He is coming up on people and they wouldn't even know he was there until it was too late."

Niagara police have arrested 21 people for impaired driving or over 80 mg alcohol in 100 mL blood in December though not all have come from RIDE checks.



St. Michael Cathalic Elementary Schaal chair and Juniar Kindergarten ta Grade 3 classes entertained a full hause last week with Christmas sangs, giving the audience af family members a large dase af Christmas spirit.

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What's open, what's closed over the holidays

Most stores and services will be closed for the holiday, and most will close early Christmas Eve.

Some businesses and services normally closed on Saturdays, may be closed Monday to observe Boxing Day.

LCBO and Beer Store outlets will be open until 6 p.m. on Christmas Eve and be closed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

There will be no mail delivery and main post offices will be closed both Friday and Monday.

Most major retailers will close early Christmas Eve. Some will reopen early on Boxing Day.

Banks will be closed Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Friday's collection of garbage, recycling and organic waste will instead be on Boxing Day — when curbside waste limits will be doubled and for the following Monday to Thursday. Christmas tree pickup is on Saturday, Jan. 9, starting at 7 a.m.

Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake offices close Thursday at noon and reopen Monday, Jan. 4.

Most Niagara Region offices and facilities will be closed on Dec. 24, 25, 28, 31 and Jan. 1.

NOTL Transit service will run regular hours Dec. 24, and will not run Dec. 25, 26 or 27. Regular service resumes Dec. 28 to 31, with no service Jan. 1. For more information, call 905-468-3266

The Niagara Advance office will close early on Dec. 24, and will re-open Tuesday, Dec. 29. It will also be closed Jan. 1.

St. Davids Public School's Christmas concert celebrated Christmas around the World, with Grade 2 and 3 students dressed in western attire to sing about Christmas in the Country.

Niagara-on-the-Lake Worship Directory

ST. DAVIDS-QUEENSTON UNITED CHURCH
1453 York Road, St. Davids
905-262-5242
www.stdavids-queenstonuc.ca
Minister: Rev Paul James
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Sunday Worship: 10:30 AM
Come and celebrate God's love for us all

CORNERSTONE COMMUNITY CHURCH
1570 Niagara Stone Rd.
www.ccchurch.ca • 905-468-7155
Sunday, December 27th
10 am Worship Gathering & Kids Ministry
Message by: Kevin Bayne, Pastor
Title: The Word Became Flesh (John 1:14-18)

Niagara United Mennonite Church
"Live Life With Us"
Christmas Day Worship Service: 11:00 am, Friday, December 25th
Worship Service 11:00 am, Sunday, December 27th
Pastors: Rudy & Sharon Dirks, Stephen Cox
1775 Niagara Stone Road
905-468-3313
http://www.redbrickchurch.ca

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
2027 Niagara Stone Road
905-468-2611 or 905-468-9673
10:00 am Worship Service
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service ~ 7:30 pm

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10:30 am Choral Eucharist
Wednesday Service 10:00 am
905-468-3123
Interim Priest: The Venerable Bruce McPetrie
www.stmarks1792.com

GateWay Community Church
(P.A.O.C.)
1665 Four Mile Creek Road
905-468-8971
December 27th • 10:30 am
Interim Pastor
Rev. Mark Collins
www.gatewaycc.ca:
Check here for events and podcasts.

ORCHARD PARK BIBLE CHURCH
www.orchardparkbiblechurch.org
434 Hunter Rd.
905-468-5731
Sunday, December 27th
9:45 am - Adult Prayer Time
10:45 am - Worship Service
Message by Pastor Reid Cooke
"Three Stages of A Believer's Life as Seen Through Joseph" - Matthew 1:18-23
Nursery is provided during the message

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www.bethanymennonite.ca

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Director of Music: Esther Giesbrecht
222 Victoria Street, NOTL
905-468-4044
www.graceunitedchurch.com
Parking passes available on Sunday morning

VILLAGE Bible Church
736 York Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake
905-688-2525
Sunday, December 27th
10:00 am Coffee Time
10:30 am Worship Service
Village Kidz (ages 1 - grade 5)
The Resolution
Pastor Jim Ball
Family Christmas Eve Service
December 24 @ 6:30pm
Pastor Greg Alderton
www.villagebiblechurch.ca

life abundant niagara
Pastor Rick Mills
384 Concession 7 Rd
905 688 3958
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9:30AM coffee 10:30AM worship
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www.lifeabundantniagara.com

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HORST ALFRED BEHRENDS

Passed away on December 9, 2015 at the age of 61. Funeral Service and Celebration of Life have taken place.
I wish to thank all my friends and colleagues for their support and well wishes in the time of my sorrow.

I was overwhelmed. Sincerely, Beatrice

With Sincere Thanks

Obituaries

HIPWELL, William "Bill" Albert - Passed away peacefully at the NHS St. Catharines Site on Tuesday, December 1, 2015 in his 70th year. Survived by Dianne Hedden and her family. Father of William, Matthew and Julie (Bill) Yablonsky. Grandfather of Grace, Nate, Cash, Devin, Gage and Hayley. Survived by sisters Margaret Franken, Frances Anderson and brother Gary (Rose) Hipwell, also several nieces and nephews. Predeceased by son Stephen, parents James and Elizabeth Hipwell and brother James Hipwell. A private service was held at George Darte Funeral Chapel. Interment at St. Davids Queenston United Church. For those who wish, memorial donations may be made to Ontario Lung Association.

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Obituaries

PALMER, Dr. John T. - Peacefully on Saturday, December 19, 2015 at the Greater Niagara General Hospital, in his 74th year; Beloved husband and best friend of Janie; Father of Patti and Susan, both of B.C.; Grandfather of Cody and Lindsay Maves, Niagara Falls; Dear brother of Helen (Rick) McMillan, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Steve (Lorna) Palmer, Ottawa; Uncle of Kim, David, Stephen, Sarah, Heather and John. Predeceased by his parents Earl and Audrey (Niagara-on-the-Lake). Born in Iroquois Falls, John was a graduate of Queens University, and was a dedicated and much loved family physician in Niagara Falls for 45 years. Funeral arrangements private. As an expression of sympathy, those who wish may make a memorial donation to either FACS Bursary Fund of the Niagara Community Foundation, 301-8 Church St., St. Catharines L2R 3B3 or to Heart Niagara. Memories, photos and condolences may be shared at
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WESTGATE, Kenneth Norman - Passed away peacefully at the Greater Niagara General Hospital on Monday, December 7, 2015 at the age of 91. Beloved partner of Laudi Sutton. Father of Diane Westgate (Donald Swaine) and Ross (Chantal) Westgate. Grandfather of Genevieve, Sandrine, Nicolas, and Erin. He will be sadly missed by his sisters Jean Berry and Carolyn Parkin. Ken is predeceased by his brothers Robert, Brenton (Irene), and Barkley. Ken served in World War II in Europe. He graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce from McGill University upon his return. He worked for Royal Trust and Northern Telecom. Ken was passionate about classical music, cycling, gardening, photography, and the Niagara Escarpment. He started a bicycle tour company in 1990s and led historical and winery tours around Niagara. Cremation has taken place, with a memorial service to take place on Saturday, January 9th, 11 am at Kingston Road United Church, 975 Kingston Road, Toronto, Ontario M4E 1T1. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Bruce Trail or a charity of your choice. Condolences, tributes, and stories can be shared at http://www.never-gone.com/memorials/kenwestgate

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Rabies battle taking place on ground, in air

Bill Sawchuk
Postmedia Network

There is a battle taking place in western Niagara and Hamilton.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is pulling out all the stops and blanketing the area with rabies vaccines to prevent the spread of the disease in raccoons.

As of Monday afternoon, the ministry has dropped 215,000 vaccine baits (which smell like vanilla) in the area by hand, helicopter and fixed wing aircraft. It is all in an effort to contain the outbreak.

"From the air, it is done at a low level, 200 feet or less," said Chris Davies, the ministry's manager of wildlife research and monitoring.

"We fly a series of lines, three-quarters of a kilometre apart, and we drop baits at different densities.

"In rural areas, we use a twin-engine Otter aircraft. In more built-up areas we use a helicopter. With the helicopter, we can get up and down the escarpment and into ravines.

"What we end up with is a baited zone out about 25 kilometres from each case. By the end of the month, we will have baited the area completely. As soon as winter arrives, we stop baiting. The animals den up, and when they do that, they aren't moving and they aren't going to contact our baits, and we are wasting our time."

Kevin Strooband, the executive director of the Lincoln County Humane Society, said he doesn't expect to find raccoons with rabies in Niagara, though the humane society isn't taking any chances.

"It would surprise me if we found one," he said. "We are diligent in what we do. The MNR is vigilant in what they do with the baiting, and they have done a great job over the years."

The alert first went out in early December after a bizarre situation in Hamilton. Two bull-mastiffs and a rabid raccoon fought in the back of Hamilton animal services van.

The dogs had been rounded up and crated inside the van after running loose in a downtown Hamilton neighbourhood. The raccoon was already in the van and was being transported to the city's animal shelter to be euthanized. The dogs contracted the disease and had to be quarantined.

Hamilton has said the department is reviewing protocols and equipment in vehicles after the incident.

Strooband said since the province issued the alert, the Lincoln County Humane Society has been sending dead raccoons it collects to the ministry. All but one of the field tests for Niagara raccoons have been negative.

"There was a field test on one in Grimsby and, based on the results, they decided they wanted it sent to Ottawa for secondary testing," Strooband said.

"That turned out to be negative early last week."

Strooband said there is a serious rabies outbreak among raccoons in New York State. That's likely how the virus arrived in southern Ontario. Raccoons don't respect international borders.

Strooband said the raccoon would likely reach the Hamilton area after hitching a ride by hiding on a truck or a train.

"We are on the border with New York, and it is rampant down there," Strooband said.

"Once it has established itself, it is hard to eradicate.

"It has always been anticipated that a raccoon can cross the border on a truck. We presume that's what happened in Hamilton. We don't know, but it is unlikely a raccoon with rabies would make it that far on its own. It is already a sick animal.

Kevin Strooband

"The raccoon gets stuck on a truck. It might have been looking for a dry place in the pouring rain. Once the vehicle is moving, the raccoon is smart enough to know not to jump off until it feels it's safe."

Strooband recommends pet owners keep their animals inside or on a leash and make sure vaccinations are up to date.

He asks residents to call the humane society if they see a sick raccoon, skunk, fox or coyote. He said don't touch, interact or try to relocate a wild animal. Anyone with a potential exposure from animal bites or scratches should seek medical attention and report the incident to public health.

On the other hand, he doesn't want residents to go too far either.

"I sense there is a bit of a level of fear in the community, but there are protocols in place," Strooband said.

"We have had two reports — one in St. Catharines and one in Grimsby — of people killing a raccoon just because it was on their property and then calling us to pick it up for testing. That's not appropriate."

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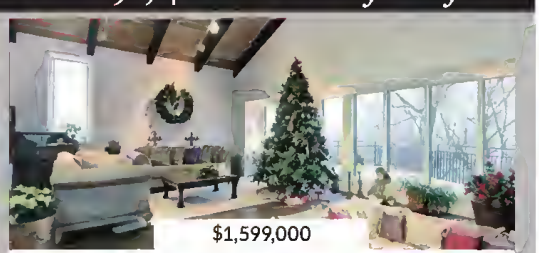

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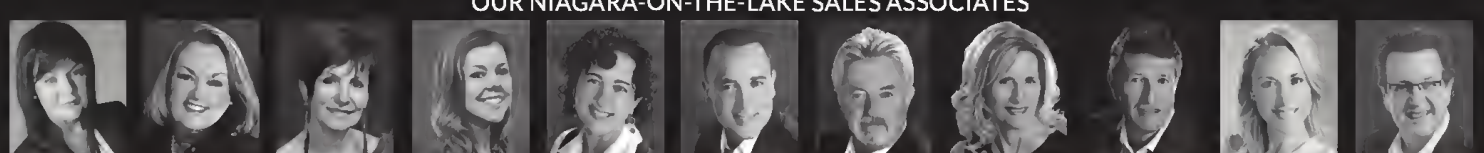

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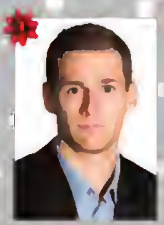
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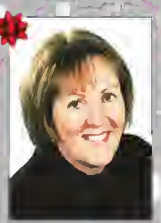
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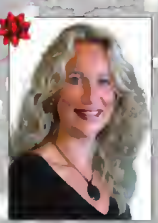
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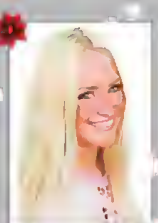
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